

Competing for State Jobs

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Developed by:

Division of Human Resources

Idaho Department of Commerce & Labor

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APPLICATION PROCESS

Steps to Obtaining a Job Within the Idaho Merit System

Finding Out About the Announcements

The Division of Human Resources posts new announcements each day, Monday through Friday. The announcements may be obtained from college placement offices, Commerce & Labor local offices, the Division of Human Resources, or from the Internet. The Division of Human Resources web site address is:

<http://www.dhr.idaho.gov>

Applying for the Position Online

If you believe you qualify for a position, click on the Apply Online button found on the left hand side of each announcement, complete the application checklist, and answer the questions regarding the minimum qualification for that position by the closing date.

If you are unable to use the apply online process, submit your responses to the exam with your completed State of Idaho Employment Application, make a copy of your application and mail the original to the Division of Human Resources before the closing date. These forms are available from the website listed above, the Division of Human Resources office, or from any Commerce & Labor office. The Division of Human Resources office or a Commerce & Labor local office must receive applications by 5:00 p.m. on the closing date.

NOTE: Pay particular attention to the section on the application that asks you to indicate where you would accept employment. If you indicate you will accept employment only in certain locations, you will be considered for openings only in those locations. Before you indicate a particular area of the state, make sure you are truly willing to move to that area.

Qualifications and Exams

Your application will be reviewed to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications. If you do, and a written or oral exam is required, you will receive a scheduling notice. Most exams are conducted in Idaho only. Oral exams are generally scheduled at the location of the job opening. Exams are usually scheduled two or three weeks after the closing date listed on the announcement, depending on the number of applicants and the type of exam. Reasonable accommodations for testing and employment will be made for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you need special accommodations in taking any exam, you will need to fill out a request form. This form may be obtained from Commerce & Labor local offices or the Division of Human Resources, or you may print a form from the website.

The type of exam for a job will be listed on the announcement under “EXAMINATION.” The basic types of exams are: rating of education and experience, oral, written, self-rating, checklist, and resume. An examination may be any combination of these basic types.

Exam Results

The announcement may tell you what rating is needed to pass the exam. If you have used Apply Online, you may receive immediate exam results depending on the type of exam. To check the status of your exam, go to “My Applications” at www.dhr.idaho.gov and sign in. Then click on “Exams Summary” in the menu at the top. Once there, you will see a summary of all your exams started and/or completed, the results, and the date the scores will expire. If you took an exam that is not rated online immediately, your status in the “Exams” section will show as “Being Reviewed”. When the review is complete, the rating will appear. Once you receive a rating, your name is automatically added to the register. An examination rating is for that exam only, and is not meant to be a rating for all job openings.

If you applied with a paper application, all applications received for that position will be reviewed (usually within two weeks after the closing date). Once your exam has been reviewed, your rating will be mailed to you. For those positions with no closing date listed, it takes approximately two weeks,

after receipt of your application, to review and assign a rating. Once you receive a rating, your name is automatically added to the register.

How Jobs Are Filled

When a state agency has a job to fill, the hiring official of the agency asks the Division of Human Resources for a hiring list of qualified candidates for the position and the location in which the opening exists. The Division of Human Resources sends the agency a list of the highest-ranking available ratings on the register at the time of the request. The hiring official may interview only one or all candidates before making a choice. However, the hiring supervisor must hire from the top ten available candidates. After the selection has been made, you may receive correspondence from the Division of Human Resources asking you to contact them to verify your status.

Chances of Employment

Your chances of employment depend on a number of factors:

- How well you rated on the exam in comparison with other applicants.
- How fast vacancies are occurring and jobs are being filled.
- How many eligible candidates there are on the register.
- The number of permanent state employees eligible for promotion to the position.
- The areas of the state in which you are willing to accept employment.

QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENT/EXAM

How to Complete a Qualifications Statement/Exam

Many job announcements for state government employment list questions to be answered in addition to the application form. The responses to these questions assist the Division of Human Resources in determining if an applicant meets the minimum qualifications of the job. Therefore, how you complete the qualifications statement/exam portion of the job announcement is very important in applying for a state government job.

The first step is to read the job announcement carefully, including: (1) the minimum qualifications, (2) the type of examination, and (3) the application information.

1. **Minimum Qualifications:** This area lists the minimum knowledge, skill level, or abilities that an applicant needs to perform the job at a minimally acceptable level. On the announcement, under minimum qualifications, you may see terminology such as “considerable knowledge” or “good knowledge.” Refer to the Guidelines for Terminology section in this publication to see what the Division of Human Resources raters use to review applications.
2. **Type of Examination:** This will list either rating of education and experience, oral, written, self-rating, checklist, or resume (or a combination of two). For example, if the exam is 100% Rating of Education and Experience, the rating is based entirely on the information supplied on the application and the qualifications statement/exam, with the main emphasis on the qualifications statement/exam. If the examination is 100% written, your rating is based entirely on the results of the written exam. If the examination is 50% written and 50% oral, the final rating is the average of the two exams. (In most cases, only those passing the written portion will be allowed to take the oral exam.) If a large number of applicants are anticipated and two examinations are involved, the Division of Human Resources will occasionally use the first exam to screen to the top ten to twenty applicants, and then give the second exam

to those applicants only. The recruitment announcement will always indicate if it is a screen to the top exam.

3. **Application Information:** If you are applying online, you will need to click on the Apply Online button on the left side of the announcement. If you have never applied online you need to type your social security number, name, and supply a password to get into the system.

Once you are in the system, use the checklist to the left of the screen to navigate through the application process. **Do not use the back button on the browser.** Items 1-5 in the Application Checklist (left of screen) must be completed for you to be considered for any specific position. Click the items to complete them. When all required fields have been completed a check mark will appear next to the item in the box.

If you are applying by paper, complete a State of Idaho Employment Application for each position. Attach a resume if required and describe what your duties were in those positions. In addition, submit your answers to the qualifications statement/exam for each position.

Guidelines for Terminology Used on Announcements

Knowledge and abilities are the minimum requirements identified by the Department for successful work performance in a position. They are written primarily in terms of what is required of a new employee at the time of appointment. They do not specify the desirable qualification of a thoroughly experienced employee in the class. The Division of Human Resources uses modifiers to describe the level of knowledge required for a particular job. For example:

Some knowledge of:

Indicates a familiarity with basic or elementary principles, terminology and with some of the more important sources of information, principles, tools, materials, equipment, or processes used. It is the amount of knowledge one might expect of an apprentice or beginner to a particular field of work.

Good knowledge of:

Indicates the knowledge expected of a person who is capable of carrying out an assignment in a normal range of standard work situations after being briefed as to the purpose of the project and receiving general guidelines regarding staffing, time, money, and policies for carrying out the work. In the skilled trades, it should be used for fully skilled journeymen level jobs. This level implies that experience is required.

Considerable knowledge of:

Indicates the need of broad subject matter knowledge in the occupational field concerned and the capacity to do most phases of it. This means that the applicant should possess a great store of information concerning applicable theories, principles, techniques, equipment and processes. This level implies that experience is required.

Guidelines for Completing the Qualifications Statement/Education and Experience Exam

- A. Describe coursework or training. The content of the class or training varies from one school to another as well as from one instructor to another. This is particularly important for military training. Do not use jargon.
- B. Describe job responsibilities, not job titles. The title “Secretary” may include job duties from filing to budgeting and can be very misleading. Do not use jargon.
- C. List your dates of employment and a supervisor’s name.
- D. Explain how your education, training and/or experience relate to the question; do not just give a definition to the terms or just restate the question. Example: How have you gained a good knowledge of bookkeeping principles? Poor Response: This means the difference between debits and credits. Better Response: I am the bookkeeper for Uncle Bob’s Pizzeria and Authentic Chinese restaurant. My main responsibilities are accounts payable and accounts receivable. Bob Pizzszkowsky, March 1979 to Present.

- E. Stay away from terms such as assisted, helped, and participated. (See list of Active Words and Phrases.) Describe your responsibility alone. For example, Applicant #1 has performed numerous heart transplants and is very descriptive about each operation. Applicant #2 has assisted in numerous heart transplants. Applicant #2 may have wiped the sweat off the doctor's head, held the light, cleaned up after the surgery, who knows what?
- F. To illustrate the difference between specific and general or vague responses to supplemental applications, put yourself in the role as the Subject Matter Expert (rater). You have been asked to rate two applicants for Administrative Assistant 1. You do not know the applicants.

Question: *Administrative Assistant 1's are the principal or only secretarial position in an office and have responsibility for the daily and on-going operation of the office. What experience do you have in this area? What responsibility have you had in reviewing incoming work and setting work priorities?*

Applicant #1: I reviewed work and set priorities while working for an attorney. I worked independently of other staff. 1992-1994

Applicant #2: My employment at the Division of Human Resources includes responsibility for scheduling meetings, filing, preparing payroll, typing correspondence, typing budgets, answering the telephone and meeting visitors, keeping employee records, maintaining leave records, and supervising two clerks. All work is given to me to distribute and set priorities. Emma Ployee, Supervisor, Division of Human Resources, December 1989--Present.

Question: *Tell us where you gained good knowledge of basic bookkeeping principles.*

Applicant #1: Recording the accounts or transactions.

Applicant #2: I have taken an Introduction to Financial Accounting class. This class covered the use and preparation of financial statements, basic terminology, and the double entry accounting system. Boise State

University, 1987 Fall Semester. I am currently the bookkeeper at Forestland Furniture where my responsibilities include accounts payable and accounts receivable.

Now that you have seen the applicants' responses through the eyes of a rater, you can see how important it is to thoroughly address the questions. Be specific in your responses to the questions. Be sure to describe your coursework, training, and/or experience. It is important that you address each question to the best of your ability. Completing a good qualifications statement/education and experience exam takes time, so plan on spending several hours preparing it.

DO:

1. Apply Online if possible; it allows hiring supervisors instant access to your application materials.
2. If applying by paper, use a separate sheet of paper, and type your answers if you can. If not, be sure your writing is neat.
3. Read the job announcement and exam instructions carefully. They both list important information about the job that can help you.
4. If you have training or school courses, describe what was taught. List titles, dates, length, and what school or seminar you attended.
5. If you have work experience, indicate your job duties. List the place of work, dates, and a contact person.
6. List volunteer work and your duties. Be sure to specify the amount of time doing the tasks.
7. List military service. Be sure to describe all of your jobs and the dates.
8. Be sure any place of work on the qualification statement is also in your State of Idaho Employment Application or resume.
9. Begin your answers with “I.” Such as, “I did ____” or “I have done_____.” (Use the Active Words and Phrases list to describe your background.)
10. Write **what** you do in a job and **not how** you do it. For example: “I answer a six-line phone for 36 staff.” Not, “I pick up the phone and say, ‘Hello, this is...’.”

DON'T:

1. **Do not** use jargon of any kind. Use terms easily understood by a person outside your company.
2. **Do not** write what others do or what your company does; write only your job duties.
3. **Do not** define or explain terms used in the question.
4. **Do not** give your opinion on how you think the work should be done.
5. **Do not** give vague answers about your duties, such as “I have done this for ten years.”
6. **Do not** think the person reading your answers knows any more about your background than what is in your answers.

EXAMPLES

Describe your background where you gained SOME knowledge of fiscal record keeping procedures.

Experience:

Idaho Transportation Department 1993-1994

Position: Office Specialist 2

I filed all the fiscal documents for the section and disposed of outdated files. In the absence of the Administrative Assistant I, I assigned voucher numbers and entered appropriate data into the book.

Education/Study:

I completed a High School accounting course. September-June 1976. I have read the Department Accounting Manual to gain an understanding of the budget process, recommended record retention periods, and to learn what types of files need to be retained. From this manual, I have gained an understanding of the importance of maintaining complete and accurate fiscal records, and have learned what types of records are necessary to keep.

Describe your background where you gained GOOD knowledge of fiscal record keeping procedures.

Experience:

Idaho Transportation Department 1994-1996

Position: Administrative Assistant 1

I was responsible for all fiscal records of the section. I verified the Expenditure Listing against a voucher number logbook. I reported any discrepancies to the Financial Control Section. The Expenditure Listing was kept until a new one was generated or until any discrepancies were reconciled.

I paid all the bills for the section and maintained copies of all accounting documents and receipts. I used these files to retrieve information requested by the Financial Control Section.

I established files for all types of fiscal records including time sheets, billing, and budget expenditure listings. These files were used to provide historical data on section budget activities in making future projections for the section.

Education/Study:

I have completed a course in Bookkeeping Principles through Community Education. This was a 10-hour course. May-June 1997. I have read and used the Department Accounting Manual on a weekly basis. I am familiar with fiscal record keeping requirements outlined in this manual. I use these guidelines to establish files.

I have had a thorough orientation by the Section Manager and the Budget Analyst on fiscal procedures. From this orientation, I have gained sound knowledge of the uses of fiscal records and the importance of maintaining up-to-date files.

Describe your background where you gained CONSIDERABLE knowledge of fiscal record keeping procedures.

Experience:

Idaho Transportation Department 1993-1994
Position: Office Specialist 2

Idaho Transportation Department 1994-1996
Position: Administrative Assistant 1

Idaho Transportation Department 1996-Present
Position: Management Assistant

All of the positions listed above have provided me with experience in fiscal record keeping procedures. I have filed fiscal records, established files, and retrieved information from such files for five years.

In my present position as Management Assistant, one of my duties is to reconstruct the section's record keeping system. I studied the present files being kept and wrote guidelines to make the files more

effective. This has increased the ease and speed of information retrieval from the fiscal files.

I worked with the Section Manager and Budget Analyst to determine the section policy on fiscal records. I conducted an in-depth analysis of the past use of these files to determine weak areas and also to discover which files were being kept unnecessarily. Recommendations were submitted to the Section Manager and adopted. As a result, information retrieval and space usage is more efficient.

I also used the fiscal records to compile historical data and work in conjunction with the Section Manager to project future budget needs.

Education/Study:

May-June 1997: Bookkeeping Principles – Community Education – 10 hours

February 1996: Governmental Accounting Course – 40 hours

September-June 1976: High School Accounting Course

Readings: Budgeting and Accounting for Non-Profit Organizations
 Department Accounting Manual

ACTIVE WORDS AND PHRASES

achieved	accomplished	accountable for
activated	administered	advanced to
analyzed	assembled	broadened
commended	completed	conducted
consolidated	constructed	contributed
controlled	coordinated	created
designed	determined	developed
devised	directed	established
evaluated	expanded	expedited
explored	hands-on-experience	headed
implemented	improved	increased
initiated	instituted	interfaced with
introduced	invented	investigated
launched	lowered costs	maintained
managed	maximized	modernized
monitored	negotiated	organized
originated	perfected	performed
pioneered	planned	prepared
produced	promoted	published
recruited	reduced	reorganized
researched	responsible for	revised
revitalized	set up	simplified
spearheaded	solved	stabilized
standardized	stimulated	strengthened
succeeded in	supervised	surveyed
systematized	targeted	updated

EXAMINATIONS

Why Use Them?

Idaho law requires that hiring be done on the basis of merit and not just who you know. The Division of Human Resources uses exams to help determine the best-qualified people for State jobs. As a citizen and taxpayer, you want public jobs to be filled by capable persons. As a job seeker, you want a fair chance to compete for jobs with other job seekers. Exams help to do this by measuring the job knowledge or ability differences between people. Those persons who rate high on an exam are more likely to be successful on the job than those who rate low. It is the responsibility of the Division of Human Resources to see that exams are reliable and job-related.

Types of Exams

The types of exams used depend largely on the nature of the job. The Division of Human Resources gives a variety of examinations ranging from performance exams to rated applications and checklists. The recruitment announcement will tell you what type of exam you will take. The most commonly used exams are (1) ratings of education and experience, (2) oral examinations, (3) written examinations, (4) self-rating examinations (5) checklist examinations, and (6) resume examinations. An examination may be any combination of these basic types. These types of exams are explained more fully in the following pages.

Scheduling of Exams

Exams are usually scheduled from one to three weeks after the closing date shown on the announcement, depending on the type of exam and the location of the testing center. Your application will first be reviewed to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications. If you do, and a written or oral exam is required, you will be notified when and where to report for the exam. Most exams are conducted in Idaho only. You will generally be scheduled at the testing center nearest your home or at the center nearest the job location. Some testing can be done only in Boise or

will be administered in the area of the state where the majority of the applicants live. The Division of Human Resources also considers the location of the current opening when they schedule oral exams.

Results of Exams

To be placed on a register, you must achieve a passing rating. After your exam is rated, if you applied by a paper copy you will receive Notice of Test Results showing whether you have passed or failed. If you applied online, you will be able to view your rating online one to two weeks after the announcement closes. The rating needed to pass an exam will be given on the job announcement. When you receive a passing rating your name will be placed on the register in rank order by rating. If you are applying for a position that has a combination of exams, you will receive notification after you have taken the first exam letting you know if you have passed and whether you are being scheduled for the next part of the exam. If you are scheduled for the next part, you will receive notification of your final rating after completing the final exam.

Ratings for an examination are for that exam only and will not affect your rating on subsequent exams. Your rating on one oral exam, for example, might be quite different than the rating you receive on another. This may be due to the differences in the job requirements as they relate to your qualifications, differences in the quantity and quality of the other job seekers, or a change in your presentation in the oral exam. A failure on one examination does not lessen your chances on future exams.

Ratings of Education and Experience

When an announcement calls for a rating of education and experience, Subject Matter Experts will evaluate and rate your experience and abilities against the requirements of the job. Subject Matter Experts are individuals who have an expertise in the position they are rating. They can rate only what you list on the application, qualifications statement/exam, or checklist. Your rating will be based on the relevance of your education and experience to the specific job for which you applied and length of your job-related education and experience. You should be careful to show the exact length of time you spent on each previous job, especially when

completing the qualifications statement/exam. Once you receive your rating, you cannot submit additional information.

Oral Exams

Communication skills are an essential element of every job. That is why the State utilizes oral exams. An oral examination is different than a job interview. An oral exam assesses several categories of expertise and each is rated. You are measured against other competitors for the same position. The oral board is usually composed of three people. Sometimes experts outside state government are used. When you appear for an oral exam, you will be told who the oral board panel members are. If you know any of the board members and feel that for some reason he or she could not rate you fairly, you may ask that his or her rating sheet be disqualified and left unrated. The Human Resource Specialist in charge of the testing will arrange this for you. Oral board members may also disqualify themselves if they feel they cannot rate an applicant fairly due to past association. Although oral exams are not job interviews, your appearance should reflect that of the position for which you are testing. Do not dress in levis, shorts, running suits, etc.

The Division of Human Resources generally gives three different types of oral examinations. In the **first type**, you will be introduced to the oral board and asked to answer a number of questions at that time. In the **second type**, you will receive several questions (called pre-exposed problems) prior to the oral exam. You will have time to read the problems, organize your thoughts, and make notes concerning how you would like to answer each question. You will generally be given anywhere from 25 to 45 minutes in this part of the exam. You may then take your notes in with you and present your ideas, answers, or solutions to the questions to the oral board panel. After you finish with the pre-exposed problems, the oral board members will ask you a number of additional questions, which you will answer at that time to further assess your qualifications for the position. In the **third type**, you will be given the entire set of test questions prior to the oral exam. You will generally be given anywhere from 25 to 45 minutes to review the questions, formulate responses and make notes concerning how you would like to answer each question. You may then take your notes in with you and present your ideas, answers or solutions to the questions to the oral board

panel. In this “preview type” oral exam, the board members will not ask you any other questions.

All questions asked in an oral exam are developed in advance by Subject Matter Experts. Each oral board member will ask you several questions from a list of these prepared questions. The board cannot deviate from this list of questions that must be asked of all the applicants in the same manner. The board cannot provide clarifying information about a question. They are limited to repeating the question as it is written. The board will not give any verbal or nonverbal feedback to your responses. While this can be unnerving, remember that an oral examination is an exam, not an interview. The board is assessing your ability to “think on your feet” and remain calm under pressure. This is not to say the board will be unfriendly. If you do not understand a question, feel free to ask to have it repeated. However, if you do not know the answer to a question, it is better to admit it than to have it repeated several times.

The oral board members will individually rate your responses as superior, good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in each category to be considered for that job. Their ratings will be averaged and converted to a rating.

In most cases, the panel’s opinion of your qualifications will not be based on your answer to any single question. They will evaluate how well you responded to the questions overall, and how well your responses and qualifications compare with those of other applicants.

How to Put Your Best Foot Forward in an Oral Exam

You will want to respond as effectively as possible to the oral board. The following will help you prepare for an oral exam.

1. Learn as much about the job as you can. Review the job announcement carefully to obtain a clear picture of the requirements and duties of the position. You may even wish to call the hiring agency’s Personnel Office to discuss how the job operates within the department and the typical problems encountered on the job.
2. Be on time for your appointment. You do not want to keep the oral board waiting. At the same time, be prepared to wait a few minutes.

The oral board tries very hard to stay on schedule. However, some oral boards fall behind schedule as the day progresses due to applicants who do not appear for their appointments or applicants taking longer than their scheduled time. Please let the Division of Human Resources know if you decide not to attend your appointment.

3. Typically, the oral board will ask questions to determine how your qualifications match those required for the position. Be prepared to tell them. It helps to imagine yourself in the job. Concentrate on your strengths rather than your weaknesses. As you are answering the questions, keep in mind that the oral board members generally do not see your application material before an oral exam. They may have no knowledge of your background.
4. Be yourself. Be natural and keep your attitude confident, but not cocky. Practice your presentation style in the mirror, in front of a friend, or use a tape recorder.
5. Make sure you understand the questions. If a question is not clear to you, don't hesitate to ask a board member to repeat the question. Don't try to second-guess or read too much into a question. Listen carefully, take a moment to compose your response, and then respond. Keep in mind that all applicants are asked the same questions by the oral board. The board cannot re-word or clarify questions.
6. Answer the questions clearly and concisely. Stick to the point. The board will evaluate only your responses. They will not "read between the lines." So make sure the information is clear and adequate. Give the oral board the information they need, but don't ramble.
7. Some questions are situational in nature. For example: "Assume you are a Human Resource Specialist. How would you handle ...?" Respond to the question as if you were already a Human Resource Specialist, not how you handled a similar situation in a past or present job. This is where the homework you did in learning as much as you can about the job will really pay off.
8. The last question of the oral examination is likely to be "Do you have anything you wish to add about your qualifications for the position?"

The board is not seeking a repeat of information at this point. The question is intended to offer you a last opportunity to present job-related qualifications that you feel have not yet been brought out. If you feel that an important job-related qualification has been overlooked, it is proper to point this out in a sentence or so. Don't be afraid to offer more information, but don't make an extended speech. Also, limit your questions to the examination process. Don't ask questions about specific job openings or duties. The time for that is during the selection interview. Also, don't ask how well you did or for the answers to specific questions. The board members rate independently, and their individual scores are averaged. They do not begin the rating process until you leave the room.

9. Keep in mind that the oral board members have been instructed not to give any encouragement or positive/negative feedback to your responses. So don't be unnerved if the three people sitting across from you are expressionless and silent. They can smile at you but won't give verbal or nonverbal feedback that could be misinterpreted. They will be taking notes of your responses only to refer back to when assigning a rating.

Organizing Your Responses to Pre-Exposed Problems and Preview Questions

Read the problem completely – Take the time to thoroughly understand and think about the problem. Don't rush through this step.

Write down ideas as they come to you – Do this as soon as the idea comes to you. Don't worry about neatness or format: These are your notes. No one else will see them. The important thing is to get your thoughts down on paper.

Outline your responses into a logical sequence – After you have written down all your ideas, start organizing how you will respond to the oral board panel in an outline form. Group your answers. This will help the oral board panel to follow you easily and will allow them to be fully attentive to your responses. For example: "As I see it, there are three parts to this problem. They are ..." Then work through each part concisely.

Write only key words or phrases – Don't get caught up in writing a full-length response because you will be tempted to read it to the board. Remember that the oral board will also be evaluating your communication skills. Write down only the words that will jog your memory during the exam.

Written Exams

The Division of Human Resources does not supply study materials for exams. If you need to study and wish to know the areas to brush up on, review the recruitment announcement. This will give you an indication of the types of areas likely to be covered in the examination for that position. You can also contact the Division of Human Resources and ask for a copy of the written breakdown form for that position. This form lists the general categories covered on the examination. You can then access relevant information through your state or local library.

Tips for Taking Written Exams

Read the instructions and any preview information carefully. They give you information needed to respond to the questions.

Read each item carefully and completely. Understand what the question is asking before you jump ahead to the answer choices. When you fully understand the question, read all the possible answer choices, and then pick out the best answer. Don't read more into the question or assume things that are not stated in the question.

Keep the position for which you are applying in mind as you answer each question. Don't relate the questions to what you did in past jobs. Keep in mind the authority level of the position (clerical vs. professional) when you are answering judgment questions.

Don't waste too much time trying to answer questions you find difficult. You get the same credit for correctly answering easy questions as you get for difficult ones. You may want to answer the easy questions first and come back to the hard ones later.

If you don't know the correct answer, mark the one you believe to be the best. You are penalized no more for a wrong answer than you would be if you left the item blank. If you are not sure which answer choice is correct, eliminate the choices you know are wrong. If you narrow down the number of choices, you increase your chances of answering the question right. Answer every question, even if you have to guess. All the questions on the exam have a correct answer. If you do not see the correct answer, you may want to choose the answer that is closest to what you feel is the correct one.

Check your answer sheet every few questions to be sure that you are using the right line and space to mark your answer.

If you become nervous while taking the exam, try relaxation exercises (deep breaths, stretching, positive attitude). You are free to stand up, leave the room, walk around, and get a drink. It's best not to plan other activities for the day you will be taking the exam so you won't be worrying about what you have to do later.

Sample Items from Written Exams

The following multiple-choice items are examples **only**. You should not expect to have any math problems on an exam for a job that does not require such knowledge, or any vocabulary if vocabulary is not important to the job. Again, the questions or problems will be related to the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the particular position for which you applied.

Some problems may state information in days, weeks, or months, but the correct answer requires you to convert to another form such as years or hours, etc. Being aware of this and reading the information carefully will help in determining the correct answer.

ALPHABETICAL/NUMERICAL ORDERING

1. Suppose you need to make an alphabetical list of the employees in your department. Here are five of the names: Henry Hennick, B. J. Henenhofer, Charles Henle, Helen Henebergh, and Harriett Hennitson. When these names are put into alphabetical order, where would Henry Hennick's name appear?

- a. First
 - b. Second
 - c. Third
 - d. Fourth**
 - e. Fifth
2. Suppose you need to put these five names into alphabetical order: Jane Buerck, Charles Beunzli, Wanda Buergelin, Alice Buetow, and Raymond Beus. When these names are put into alphabetical order, where would Jane Buerck's name appear?
- a. First
 - b. Second
 - c. Third**
 - d. Fourth
 - e. Fifth

ARITHMETIC

3. In April, office supplies normally worth \$64 are bought at a 6 percent discount. In May, they can be purchased for 6 percent above the April price. How much do they cost in May?
- a. \$60.33
 - b. \$61.16
 - c. \$63.00
 - d. \$63.77**
4. Pencils cost \$2.40 per dozen. Writing tablets cost \$5.50 for six, and pens cost \$4.80 per dozen. Charles is ordering 48 pencils, 15 tablets, and 36 pens. How much will the order cost?
- a. \$33.25
 - b. \$36.00
 - c. \$37.75**
 - d. \$41.50

SCHEDULING

5. A training program involves showing a class of five people an instructional videotape in one room for an hour, followed by some hands-on training on five pieces of equipment for an hour and a half in another room. To train the most applicant classes in a day, they should be scheduled every:
- a. Hour
 - b. Forty-five minutes
 - c. Hour and a half**
 - d. Two hours
 - e. Two and a half hours
6. Five people need to meet with your supervisor for an hour each on Monday. Mr. Allard can meet at 10:00, 1:00, or 3:00, but prefers 1:00. Mr. Blake can meet at 11:00 or 2:00 and has no preference. Ms. Carver can make it at 10:00, 11:00, or 1:00, but prefers 1:00. Mr. Dalton can meet at 10:00, 11:00, 2:00, or 3:00 and prefers 10:00. Dr. Ehlers can make it at 10:00, 1:00, or 2:00 and prefers 2:00. Scheduling each person for only one hour and trying to give as many of him or her as possible their preferred time, for what time should Mr. Dalton be scheduled?
- a. 10:00**
 - b. 11:00
 - c. 1:00
 - d. 2:00
 - e. 3:00

READING COMPREHENSION

7. “This memo is to remind you of our staff meeting on Wednesday. Ed Hall, author of ‘Communications Procedures,’ is going to be at the meeting to discuss his draft procedures. Since you have this opportunity to ask Ed questions about the procedures he proposes, be sure to read his draft before we meet. Our group will meet in the Monona Room at 1 p.m. for about two hours.”

According to this passage:

- a. It is important to read Ed's draft, since he will not be able to attend the meeting.
 - b. Mr. Hall's procedures have been implemented.
 - c. The group will meet at two o'clock.
 - d. A two-hour staff meeting is scheduled for Wednesday.**
 - e. The best time to obtain a copy is at the meeting.
8. "A mix-up in our numbering of the bulletins issued by us has resulted in two bulletins bearing the same number. Please make the following corrections on the bulletins in your possession: The bulletin bearing a date of 5-27-92 on the subject 'Length-of-Service Payment' should be correctly identified as #51. The bulletin issued 6-19-92 on the subject 'Instructions for Processing Tax Adjustments' should have the '51' crossed out and be correctly identified as #52. The bulletin issued on 6-20-92 on the subject 'Instructions for Processing Compensation Claims' should be correctly identified as #53. The bulletin issued on 6-23-92 on the subject 'Probationary Periods' should be correctly identified as #54. Please make these corrections on the materials in your possession."

According to this passage:

- a. The bulletin issued 6-19-92 is correctly identified as "51."
- b. You are to correct the mix-up on bulletins in your possession by renumbering them.**
- c. Return your materials to us so they can be renumbered for you.
- d. Three bulletins should be renumbered and the fourth discarded.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

9. You are an employee in a social services department. One of your department's programs provides money to help needy people (the clients) pay their heating and electricity bills. To receive this help, clients must bring in their overdue heating or electricity bills or "shut-off" notices to prove that they need money for these purposes. You are not allowed to refer clients to the caseworkers without one of these items. A client comes in and asks for money to pay his heating bill. He has no documents with him. You tell him that without the documents, he cannot see a

caseworker. He becomes angry and loud. He demands that you let him see a caseworker. Which one of the following should you do?

- a. Refer him to a caseworker.
 - b. Refer him to your supervisor.
 - c. Tell him you can't help him without an overdue bill or "shut-off" notice.
 - d. Explain the purpose of the financial aid and why the overdue bill or "shut-off" notice is needed.**
10. If an angry citizen uses abusive language in objecting to the service provided by your department, you should:
- a. Tell the person you do not have to accept such language and leave.
 - b. Listen quietly until the person finishes, and then explain what can be done to correct the trouble.**
 - c. Advise the person that a more appropriate attitude would help.
 - d. Suggest the person return after gaining some self-control.

SUPERVISION

11. Which of the following is the least likely to occur when a supervisor uses negative motivators such as fear, coercion, intimidation, and punishment?
- a. Employees learn how to avoid being discovered.
 - b. Employees "toe the line," but hate the job.
 - c. Employee productivity will be lower.
 - d. Employees will respect their supervisor, providing such motivators are used sparingly and fairly.**
12. What is the best thing to do about an employee under your supervision who is a chronic complainer?
- a. Ignore the employee if the work is satisfactory.
 - b. Talk to the other employees and try to persuade them not to reward the complaining behavior.
 - c. Give the employee recognition and reassurance about his abilities.**
 - d. Make a reduction in complaints a part of the employee's performance plan.

Self-Rating Exams

When an announcement calls for a self-rating examination, you will either be asked to fill out a checklist where you mark your answers on the checklist itself, or you will be given a questionnaire with a list of examples of work performed by the position for which you are applying. For each job example listed on the questionnaire, you will be asked to choose from a list of self-rating statements the one that best describes your education, training, and/or experience related to that statement.

Example:

Job Task: Completing a diary or daily logbook to document work you performed.

Self-Rating Statements

1. I have not had education, training, or experience in performing this task.
2. I have had education, training, or experience in performing this task, but have not yet performed it on a job. (Hobby or work at home experience is acceptable.)
3. I have performed this task on a job. My work on this task was monitored closely by a supervisor or senior employee to ensure compliance with proper procedures. (Self-employment is acceptable.)
4. I have performed this task as a regular part of a job. I have performed it independently and normally without review by a supervisor or senior employee, and I am considered a journey-level worker in this area (at least three years full-time paid experience).
5. I am considered an expert in performing this task. I have supervised performance of this task, or I am normally the person who is consulted by other workers to assist them in doing this task because of my expertise.

Checklist Exams

A checklist examination is similar to the self-rating examination. You are given a question with a choice of answers. You are asked to mark the one answer that matches your education and experience. You may be asked in the last question of the examination to insert a customized resume verifying your answers. Make sure you do this, if you do not, you may fail the examination. Creating a resume in the application checklist will not replace this important step.

Resume Exams

All that is required for this examination is a customized resume. It is important to read the job announcement. This will state in detail (other announcements state this in more general terms) the qualifications needed for this opening. Make sure your resume reflects the education and/or experience you have that show you meet those qualifications.

Your resume will be longer and more detailed than the generic resume normally submitted. Show dates of employment, positions held, job duties, and other pertinent information.

INTERVIEWING

Preparing for an Interview

Depending upon your placement on a register, you may be called by an agency that has a vacancy. Because the interview is in person and is of high importance in the hiring decision, it usually results in a great deal of anxiety. Try regarding the interview as an opportunity to showcase your assets.

The purpose of the interview from the employer's point of view is to find out how closely your qualifications match the needs of the particular vacancy and how well you will fit in with the team. Review your self-study and agency research to determine what to stress in the interview. You will also find a practice interview with a friend can be helpful.

It is impossible to over stress the importance of appearance. We all are greatly influenced by our initial reaction to people. If the interviewer gets a bad first impression, it is nearly impossible to overcome it in a 30-minute interview. Stick to an appearance that indicates that you care about yourself—clean, neatly pressed clothes, good personal grooming and good posture. Avoid faddish fashions. The clothes you wear should be appropriate for the kind of job you are interviewing.

Tips for Successful Interviewing

- ❑ Go alone. Leave relatives, family (children), and friends at home or outside.
- ❑ Be on time. Give yourself extra time to ensure this.
- ❑ Bring a pen, notepad, professional references, and a copy of your application.
- ❑ Be nice to secretaries. They have clout.
- ❑ Remember the interviewer's name.
- ❑ Keep your mouth free of food, gum, cigarettes, etc.
- ❑ Be ready to shake hands if the interviewer extends his/hers.
- ❑ Smile, look friendly and confident. (Even if you're scared inside.)
- ❑ Be yourself—be your best positive self!
- ❑ Watch your posture and non-verbal cues. Have good eye contact.

- ❑ Think before you speak. A pause prior to answering is fine.
- ❑ Use good, clear speech. Avoid slang, acronyms, and poor grammar.
- ❑ Be upbeat and interested.
- ❑ Stress your qualifications that are relevant to the agency.
- ❑ If you have to discuss a weakness make sure you turn it into a positive. An example would be “I make sure I take notes because my memory is not always what it used to be.”
- ❑ Be aware of non-verbal cues from the interviewer.
- ❑ Find out what happens next if you are not told.
- ❑ Thank the interviewer.

Commonly Asked Questions

- What are your future career plans?
- In what type of positions are you most interested?
- Why do you think you might like to work for our company?
- What jobs have you held? Why did you leave?
- Why did you choose your particular field of work?
- What do you know about our agency?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
- What would you say are some of your most important accomplishments?

Evaluation Factors Used by Interviewers

Following is a list of negative factors evaluated by interviewers, which may lead to rejection.

1. Poor personal appearance.
2. Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited, and “know-it-all.”
3. Inability to express oneself clearly--poor voice, diction, grammar.
4. Lack of planning for career--no purpose and goals.
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm--passive, indifferent.
6. Lack of confidence and poise--nervousness, ill at ease, and indecisive.
7. Lack of courtesy--ill mannered.
8. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer’s time.
9. Condemnation of past employers and no interest in company or industry.
10. Emphasis on people he/she knows.
11. Narrow interests.

12. Late to interview.
13. Asks no questions about the job.
14. Indefinite response to questions.